

ClemsonLIFE (LEARNING IS FOR EVERYONE) SCHOLARSHIPS

INDEPENDENCE, EMPOWERMENT AND FRIENDSHIP.

You will find ClemsonLIFE students working at the front desks of Clemson's facilities. They work internships as managers for the University's sports teams, from women's crew to men's football. They can also be found working at local businesses throughout the Clemson community. It's clear that ClemsonLIFE students have become embedded within Clemson University and the city. And our students and the local community have fully embraced them.

ClemsonLIFE (Learning Is For Everyone) is a post-secondary education program with the specific purpose of helping young adults with intellectual disabilities obtain the life skills necessary to gain employment and live independently. The LIFE program opened its doors in 2009 as a two-year program with three staff members and an initial cohort of five LIFE students. Since then, the program has grown into a nationally recognized four-year program with 40 students, eight full-time staff members, 12 part-time staff members and more than 500 student volunteers.

In its work to equip students with occupational, social and independent living skills, the ClemsonLIFE program has not only influenced its students' careers and independence, but it has brought inclusion into public conversation and prompted people to see disabilities in a different light.

"ClemsonLIFE taught me how to live on my own. I learned how to budget my money, get along with roommates and make to-do lists for home and work. I live with a roommate in Clemson and clean rooms and apartments at Clemson Downs. I have made friends there, and the residents say I do a great job. It makes me feel good when they say that."
– Hope Banks, ClemsonLIFE '16



Intellectual disabilities should not be a barrier to living life to its fullest — or to having the benefit of a college experience. All LIFE students attend classes, eat in the dining halls, workout at the campus gymnasium and attend sporting events. They are involved in a variety of clubs across the university, including Greek life and intramural sports. Their participation, characterized as enthusiastic and inspiring, contributes to the overall Clemson experience for other students across campus.

ClemsonLIFE graduates have an impressive 84 percent employment rate, which is more than twice the national average (between 14 and 34 percent) for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program has also been extremely successful in helping students live independently, with 44 percent of graduates living independently. This is nearly three times the national average (16 percent) for this population.

SKILLS TO LAST A LIFETIME.

A public university setting is ideal for this kind of training for young adults with intellectual disabilities because:

- All young adults go through a similar development process that requires certain activities, experience and support.
- All young adults must develop skills and understanding about themselves and the world around them in order to fully participate in society and to become successful, contributing adults.
- Higher education is a vehicle for self-empowerment, access to social networks, employment and independence.
- Group membership provides essential motivation and support for learning and participation in community life.

ClemsonLIFE incorporates academics, independent living, employment and social/leisure skills in a university setting with the goal of producing self-sufficient young adults. Along with one traditional course, ClemsonLIFE students participate in a number of functional academic courses to help them gain employment and live independently, including:

- banking and budgeting;
- functional literature;
- independent living skills;
- social skills;
- self-advocacy and safety;
- employment skills; and
- supervised job placement and internships.

Independent living assistants reside with LIFE students in University apartments to help them learn skills such as cooking and cleaning during the first two years of the program. Students in the third- and fourth-year advanced program move off campus into their own apartments. This program is designed for students who have demonstrated the ability to safely live independently, sustain employment and integrate socially.

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FUNDING THEIR FUTURE.

Initially supported through a three-year grant from the College Transition Connection, the LIFE program is completely self-sustaining through student tuition and private donations. The program does not receive any funding from the University. Providing such a structured, high-quality and well-supervised program focused on vocational and independent-living success for young adults with disabilities is expensive. The total cost for a LIFE student to attend the program for one academic year is more than \$36,000. This cost is prohibitive for many families, especially in light of the fact that many have exhausted savings on special care needed during the K-12 years. Hence, scholarships are crucial to support these dedicated students.

Your gift to scholarships for ClemsonLIFE will be added to the Grace Catherine Clements ClemsonLIFE Endowed Grant-in-Aid — which was established to honor Grace, the daughter of Clemson University President Jim Clements and First Lady Beth Clements.

Your financial support to scholarships ensures that ClemsonLIFE continues to encourage, guide, mentor and foster the abilities of these young people. Your impact will extend to the entire University and our surrounding community. But most importantly, your gift to scholarships for ClemsonLIFE will impact our LIFE students' lives forever.

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